

und Handwerkern, die das alte Arrangement aufkündigen. Im Festsystem übernehmen sie keine Ämter mehr und reinterpretieren das Solidaritätskonzept als politische Außenvertretung. Hier verortet Wimmer die Indianerführer, die mit Ladinos in der politischen Hierarchie konkurrieren. Ähnliche Effekte entstehen, wenn durch Landknappheit eine Proletarisierung der ärmeren Schichten eintritt, die den alten *principales* die Gefolgschaft kündigen. In beiden Fällen ist die innere Struktur in Auflösung, es kommt zu Rivalitäten verschiedener Gruppen, und Adressat von Solidaritätsforderungen wird der Staat. Zu jedem Gemeindetyp, der durch Transformationen entsteht, führt Wimmer Beispiele aus Mesoamerika an.

Am Ende seines Buches unternimmt der Autor den Versuch, seine Konfigurationsanalyse als Theorie zu rechtfertigen. Da Universaltheorien mit allgemeingültigen Gesetzen heute keine Akzeptanz fänden und Unwägbarkeiten, Zufälle und eigenwillige Handlungen Geschichte zum "chaotischen" Phänomen machten, schränkt Wimmer – in Abstimmung übrigens mit ähnlichen Überlegungen anderer Fachdisziplinen – den Geltungsbereich seiner Theorie raum-zeitlich auf Mesoamerika von der Kolonialzeit bis zu Gegenwart ein. Aber er hält es für lohnenswert, seine Transformationstheorie für andere Regionen zu testen. Dann aber sollte nicht wie bei Wimmer als theoretisches Objekt ein allgemeingültiger Indianer konstruiert und existierende Kulturunterschiede eingebettet werden. Sonst steigt die Gefahr, daß sich statt empirischer oder theoretischer Befunde eigene Überzeugungen einschleichen, wie bei Wimmers "universaler Optimierungsstrategie", die davon ausgeht, daß Fabrikbesitzer und Indianer letztlich dieselben wirtschaftlichen Ziele verfolgen. Aber vielleicht wird damit nur wieder die Frage nach der Relativität von Kultur(en) und dem Universalitätsanspruch der wissenschaftlichen Konzepte gestellt, über die man, wie schon gesagt, ja geteilter Meinung sein darf.

Lioba Rossbach de Olmos

**Yang, Mayfair Mei-hui:** *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets. The Art of Social Relationships in China.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994. 370 pp. ISBN 0-8014-9592-X. Price: \$ 20.85

The day I finished Mayfair Yang's book, one of my former students, a young man from northern China, came to my office to present me with a box of "moon cakes." The autumn moon festival, when many Chinese exchange these round pastries with friends or relatives, had just passed and he suggested my children might enjoy such a treat. After chatting briefly about how we each had spent our summer, he asked me for a letter of recommendation. This was no attempt at bribery. Rather, his actions were an expression of etiquette and decorum, evoking (quite effectively in my case) the *renqing* or "human sentiments" that underlie interpersonal relationships in China. Yang's insightful new book addresses these fluid and informal ties: the constructed webs of *guanxi* ("relationship") between individuals.

Exploring this fundamental aspect of contemporary urban Chinese social organization, Yang guides readers through an analysis of Chinese "modernity" and its "disorders." The first half of the book consists of an ethnographic study of *guanxixue*, the studied "art of social relationships." Describing its various "dialects" (pejorative, mixed, and pragmatic), Yang explains the logic, tactics, and etiquette in its performance, using illustrative anecdotes, quotations from written texts and oral interviews, popular idiomatic expressions, and her own reflexive narrative on conducting fieldwork in urban China. Along the way, she poses some challenging questions, such as whether it is "ethical to deceive a person into talking freely by posing as a native" (17).

Yang's narrative consciously engages her role as ethnographer and author, or the "subject-position of the anthropologist," expressing her own identity in a manner both self-critical and openly declarative in agenda. Confronted by bureaucratic intransigence in her attempts to gain access to a factory research site, she became intrigued with how ordinary people neutralize or subvert bureaucratic obstacles to obtain goods, services, or authorizations. The object of her research became her principal methodology, as she concluded "the best way to undertake a study of the art of *guanxi* was to adopt its very form as the method of fieldwork" (24). "Participant-observation" in its literal sense enabled Yang to protect the identity of her respondents, avoiding "fixed site" research and keeping the "density" of her contacts low. Deeply concerned with the extremes of state power, particularly under "totalitarian" regimes, she sought to write a "history that refuses to further the project of the state" (210), and regards this work as "an effort at cultural renewal" (30) and a "performative act ... of counter-politics against the state" (174).

Part II contextualizes "the art of social relationships" in a broader theoretical framework, exploring its potential for popular political empowerment. Yang addresses issues not only of economy and society but also of cognition and psychology, working towards a critique of state power that situates *guanxixue* at the core of an emerging popular domain or "people's realm" (*minjian*). She sees *guanxi* not as a "second economy" but rather as a "second society" (Ch. 5), an "alternative system of relational ethics and social integration" that created "a polity of its own" by "'poaching' on the public domains monopolized by the state" (308). In an anthropological rectification of names, Yang depicts *guanxixue* as a progressive political force. Situated between self and society, its ethics have worked against state power under socialism, laying foundations for formal voluntary associations that may one day emerge under a more tolerant political climate.

Ch. 7 offers a bold interpretation of the construction of personhood in Maoist China. Drawing on Freud and Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Yang explores the psychological dynamics of the Mao cult, which peaked during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In what resembles a psychoanalysis of national character, she argues that a dominant "superego," oriented to extreme